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MAD- 2020
Day - 10
International
Relations

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Question:

What is the geo-political significance of Indian Ocean? Explain.

Answer:

Indian Ocean is third largest water body of the world that has vital sea lanes of communication crisscrossing it and which feeds Asia's largest economies

1. **Trade and commerce:** Around 80 per cent of the world's seaborne oil trade passes through the choke points of this ocean and therefore it literally connects the east to the west.
2. **Regional Security:** The system of governance in the area depends highly on the prevailing political thought processes. Any alteration in relations could alter the security scenario of the region.
3. **Zone of Strategic Competition:** China is investing hundreds of billions of dollars in infrastructure projects across the region as part of its Belt and Road Initiative. But India considers itself to be the net-security provider of the Indian Ocean region.
 - The growing presence of extra regional powers and nuclear capable nations has further altered the existing security framework. This is affecting the existing military balance and the impending imbalance could create a new architecture that could affect the prevailing security scenario.
4. **Military Footprint:** Countries such as USA, France, China including India, have either come up with, or, are in the process of set-up their military establishments at key strategic points in the ocean, thus raising the stakes of militarization.
5. **High Population Impact:** One-third of the world population resides in the countries bordering the Indian Ocean. Thus, the impacts of any ups or downs are far reaching.

The economic upsurge of some nations and stagnation/slowdown of others is throwing up challenges that could affect the regional and international markets. The lack of intra-regional trade as compared to the extra-regional trade has limited the relations between nations in the region. Added to it is the growing competition and race for exploiting available natural resources, which could bring in new challenges to the region in times to come.